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ABSTRACT

The programs of the study of religion at 14 religion departments at church-related colleges are compared. The nature of the study of religion is considered with reference to the nature of the institution in which it is conducted, and the potential contribution of such departments in the future development of the study of religion as a discipline is evaluated. The analysis focuses on the department's stated purposes and programs, faculty profiles, curricular offerings, special curricular programs, extracurricular continuing education programs, and faculty and/or department professional involvements with the sponsoring religious body. The following interpretations of the findings are offered: the departments with the most clarity about their purpose and program were those who understood their work with reference to the identity of the institution and the sponsoring religious body and whose context, religiously speaking, is distinctive ("embodying" and Roman Catholic institutions); those departments with the least clarity about their purpose and program are those in the "proclaiming" category, whose departmental orientation falls somewhere between Christian studies and religious studies, and whose institution and sponsoring religious body are unclear about their own role in higher education. Additionally, there is an increased emphasis on the importance of first and second level all-college religion courses for the student with general interest; increased concern about the decreasing number of majors; increased reliance upon social scientific models, methods, and data; and increased interest in the department of religion's role in general education or core studies. Overall, considerable diversity was found to characterize the study of religion in private church-related higher education. (SW)

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THE STUDY OF RELIGION

IN

CHURCH-RELATED HIGHER EDUCATION:

A REPORT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
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Outline

A. Doing Something With It

B. Between Christian Studies and Religious Studies

C. The "Pluralism and Church-Related Higher Education" Project

D. Fourteen Cases

E. Toward an Interpretation

F. A Modest Proposal

Footnotes

Appendix A: Categories of Church-Relatedness
Appendix B: Categories and Degrees of Church-Relatedness: The Colleges
Appendix C: Categories and Degrees of Church-Relatedness: The Denominations

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Glenn R. Bucher

A. Doing Something With It

Two months ago an unexpected letter arrived from the Philippines. It was written by a 1980 religion graduate of The College of Wooster. The daughter of a Presbyterian minister, this student grew up in a small western Minnesota town. She was now temporarily living in a Manila mansion. Her college career was outstanding: the academic work, campus leadership, and dormitory counseling, all of which contributed to significant personal and intellectual growth. She benefited from her college experience because she intentionally shaped it according to her own needs, which she identified. Following her June graduation, this student spent a week in her home town, two weeks in New York City teaching English to Southeast Asian refugees while training with the YMCA for a teaching position in Taiwan, and six weeks in Taipei deciding that the YMCA had misled her about the year's commitment, that she could not change the situation, and that she was justified in leaving. After a few weeks of traveling, she landed in Manila.

In the letter she reflected on her religion major. It had taken on unexpected meaning in her travels. She discovered that it was an important component of what she called her "identity." In numerous conversations in Southeast Asia she had drawn on her grasp of the structures and belief systems of various religious traditions. She reflected on the ethical dimensions of international problems, now having observed them first-hand: population, political alliances, the environment, and energy. Her experiences included a lengthy conversation with a Philippino Roman Catholic on developments in the Vatican under Pope John Paul II. The response to having <u>experienced</u> the value of four years of liberal arts and religious studies was this: "I actually felt qualified to talk! Marvelous!"[1]

This personal story serves as a parable. It is an appropriate illustration of a passionate testimony on the liberal arts, recently published as a student poem under the title, "I Tell Them I'm a Liberal Arts Major." Part of the poem goes like this:

> What am I going to do with it? You see, I'm making it a definitive work: repapering parts of my soul that can never be toured by my friends; using every breath to tread water in all-night swimming competitions with Hegel, Marx, and Wittgenstein; fondling the bottom of civilization for ropes of pearl; whispering late into the night on a river bank with Zola; stopping often, soaking wet and exhausted, to weep at the Bastille. What am I going to do with it? I'm going to sneak it away from my family gathered for my commencement and roam the high desert making love to it.[2]

The letter also illustrates what Jacob Neusner must have meant when he said that "the first step in any humanistic venture of learning must be to allow the other to be alien, yet to seek for what is like ourselves in the alien. The final step is to understand more than that the stranger is in ourselves. It is to realize, also, that we are in the stranger."[3] The letter is a reminder that the "alien" appears at unexpected times and places, and that it is encountered at many different levels and dimensions of existence.

This student letter also provides a point of human reference for the study reported on in this paper. How did this student's undergraduate religion major affect the ways in which her post-graduation story has unfolded? What do her recent experiences say about the strengths and weaknesses of the study of religion as she pursued it? What are the insights which provide an informal rationale for the liberal arts in private church-related higher education? These are some of the questions the letter inspired. They are similar to those at the center of this study. Questions about the nature and task of the study of religion and church-related higher education are not new. What is new and what demands attention is the context in which these questions now are posed.

This paper is the initial report on a study of fourteen departments of religion at fourteen church-related institutions which represent various models of the church and college

partnership. The purposes of the study are (1) to compare and analyze the purposes and programs of the study of religion in these departments, (2) to consider the nature of the study of religion with particular reference to the nature of the institution in which it is conducted, and (3) to evaluate the potential contribution of such departments to the future development of the study of religion as a discipline. The primary focus of the study is practical, institutional, and programmatic. The intention is to establish a contemporary profile of the study of religion in one educational sector in order to provide a basis for the consideration of theoretical and conceptual issues.

Reasons for undertaking this study illustrate the numerous concerns which it reflects. Ten years of professional work in a department of religion at a liberal arts college which maintains ties with a mainline denomination exposes one to the evolution of the study of religion, to faculty and administrative perceptions of the study of religion, to the assets and liabilities of a department of religion in this context, and to key issues before a department as it considers its future. Research and writing for a year (1980-1981) on issues in private higher education inevitably raise concerns about institutional identity and the purpose and program of departments of religion. A recent study on pluralism in church-related higher education provides a foundation for further research, one component of which concerns the relationship of institutions to their departments of religion. Finally, evidence mounts daily that between now and the century's end, portions of the private higher education sector which include many church-related colleges and universities will be affected by many potentially adverse forces. An issue of an educational journal recently featured a debate ("Learning to Cope with a Downward Slope") on whether "management for decline" or "strategic planning" is the more appropriate means for dealing with the problems facing higher education.[4] These problems will force reconsideration of fundamental questions of institutional identity, purpose, program, and constituency, all of which have an impact upon the religious dimension, one component of which is the study of religion.

These are some of the reasons for this study. Though the educational and religious contexts are new, the basic questions which give focus to the study are not. That is evident in an important previous analysis of the undergraduate study of religion. One of the conclusions of Claude Welch's 1972 Religion in the Undergraduate Curriculum: An Analysis and Interpretation was this:

> The options--sometimes dilemmas--faced in religious studies exist at all levels of the academic enterprise, from the classroom to the institution as a whole. The choices are prima facie pedagogical, relating to courses and programs, but they rest essentially on broader decisions, concerning questions not at all peculiar to religious studies, questions such as "What is liberal education?," "What is academic responsibility?," "What are the goals of contemporary public, private, and church-related institutions of higher learning?" The questions for religious studies thus merge increasingly with the questions of liberal education generally, and if the goals and patterns of the former are unclear it is largely because the aims and norms of undergraduate education as a whole are uncertain.[5]

This observation assists in defining the focus of this study. The broader questions about liberal arts, academic responsibility, and church-related higher education are more important now than they were a decade ago. There are options and dilemmas facing religionists today which frequently are identified in the professional literature. What is missing from the literature, as well as from recent studies on church-related higher education, is the bringing together of institutional religious studies issues, as Welch suggests, and as his 1972 study sought to do.

This study initiates that process by examining fourteen case studies and the inter-relationships of institutional identity, purpose, and program, on the one hand, and the identity, purpose, and program of religious studies, on the other. Obviously, this is not the only sphere of higher education in which the study of religion is conducted, though one-half of the 1600 private institutions in the United States are church-related. However, it is the original sphere and one which may play an important role in the future evolution of the discipline and the profession. What role a department of religion might play in the future evolution of an institution with ties to a religious body is a concomitant question, though it falls beyond the limits of this present study.

B. Between Christian Studies and Religious Studies

Within the last year, disciplinary issues in the study of religion (conceptual models, purposes, methodologies, and curricula) have received considerable professional attention. In his lecture inaugurating a new Department of Religious Studies at Arizona State University, "Stranger at Home: The Task of Religious Studies," Jacob Neusner articulated the concern for disciplinary identity by identifying the "four sins" of religious studies: lack of critical self-consciousness, prevalence of academic consumerism, inability of religious generalists to speak as specialists in general, and disregard for linguistic studies in the study of religion.[6] This identity issue (some find it most clearly expressed in the annual American Academy of Religion program) was also underlined in the June, 1980, issue of The Forum for Liberal Education, the journal of the Association of American Colleges whose interest in the academic study of religion dates back at least to its mid-1960s' Commission on Religion in Higher Education. Nine representative programs are reviewed in this issue, thirteen others are cited, and a bibliography is provided. In his introductory essay, David C. Smith--Director of the Society for Values in Higher Education--says that the identity, disciplinary character, and contributions to human self-understanding of religious studies remain issues before the profession, particularly now in light of programmatic concerns like the relationship between religion and philosophy, the intellectual and political status of departments of religion, and student interest and enrollment.[7]

In Richard Wentz's recent article on the grammar of religious studies ("Call Me Ishmael") in The Christian Century, he searches for a grammatical description of the purpose of religious studies because, as a new discipline, its language is still being formed. Wentz claims that religious studies is "the interpretation of otherness," that its grammar must include encounter with otherness, enchantment with another world, and adventure into it.[8] In an earlier Academic Study of Religion section at this American Academy of Religion meeting, Paul Wiebe ("Search for a Paradigm: Toward a Theory of Religious Studies") contended that religious studies is a new discipline but not yet a discipline. It also suffers, he insisted, from intellectual and political bankruptcy as illustrated in its lack of contributions to academic and intellectual culture. Wiebe proposes that the crisis in religious studies will be resolved as a theory and paradigm are developed for the theoretical grounding of the discipline.[9]

These theoretical concerns about religious studies are

joined with their practical counterparts in the most recent issue of the Bulletin of the Council on the Study of Religion. Four professors who chair religion departments at Colorado College, Dartmouth, Southern Methodist University, and the University of Northern Iowa identify issues which range from new student interests to curricular developments to the ingredients for departmental success. Professor Lonnie Kliever of SMU summarizes all of this recent literature as he describes the state of religious studies with three succinct comments: (1) "our departments are still caught between the time of Christian studies and religious studies"; (2) "changes on and off campus have revealed the precarious place of religious studies in the modern university"; and (3) there is still a "yet-to-be-found methodological base for religious studies as an autonomous discipline."[10]

The significance of this recent attention to the disciplinary status of religious studies is not found in its originality. In Graduate Education in Religion, the 1970 study by Claude Welch which led to his 1972 analysis and interpretation of religion in the undergraduate curriculum mentioned earlier, he said: "the academic study of religion has firmly established its identity" and "the academic study of religion is going through an identity crisis."[11] The same year, Van Harvey insisted that the study of religion was still dominated by the Protestant divinity school model.[12] The Paul Ramsey and John Wilson festschrift honoring George F. Thomas (The Study of Religion in Colleges and Universities) was also published in 1970.[13] In that volume, Wilson anticipated the increasing delineation and clarification of religion as a field of study, and James Gustafson noted the tension between student interests, on the one hand, and disciplinary identity on the other.

The on-going professional discussion about the study of religion as a discipline, which this recent literature illustrates, provides the immediate professional context within which this present study of fourteen departments of religion in church-related institutions is set. Within the profession, consensus has not been achieved on fundamental disciplinary issues, though there is general agreement on what some of them are. The increasing delineation and clarification of the field of religious studies, which John Wilson anticipated a decade ago as a consequence of the history of religions emphasis, has occurred only in some departments and segments of the profession.[14] Some whose scholarship and teaching have been influenced significantly by a comparative, historical, or phenomenological methodology now are concerned about the limits of that form of objectivity. This seems to be a concern of Neusner and Wentz in publications mentioned earlier, and it reminds one of a 1974 Daedalus article

on religious consciousness by Robert Bellah. Others upon whom the religious studies impact has never been significant now are concerned about the liabilities of a traditional approach, though they are also unclear about how religious studies and Christian studies can be creatively combined. Some department programs reflect the progression from "confessional particularity to ecumenical theism to religious pluralism" which has resulted, as one person put it, in "no decent organizational principles in the curriculum."[15] Others have begun to adjust to these changes by a change in department name, new hiring policies, and a different organization of the curriculum, though it is difficult to locate many convincing examples where a new identity has been articulated clearly and with intellectual integrity. Still others--perhaps the majority--have given only casual attention to these developments.

In the final analysis, it is individual departments in specific institutions which must decide, on the basis of many practical considerations, what this public discussion about the study of religion as a professional discipline means, and how its implications are to be institutionalized. Though the following account is not a totally representative one, it does suggest one set of influences and responses which is not uncommon:

> The history of this department from 1967 to the present is in many ways typical of other departments in comparable private older colleges. Originally, the department was exclusively biblical in its focus. All sophomores of this college, up to and including 1967-68, were required to take one semester of Old Testament and one semester of New Testament. The name of the department up to 1967-1968 was "Biblical History, Literature, and Interpretation." All faculty in the department at that time were Protestant Christians by persuasion, and their specialties were limited to either the area of Biblical Studies or Protestant Theology. No courses in Judaism or Catholicism were offered by this department, and there were virtually no courses in the area of Religion and Society, and only two courses offered in Asian Religions by non-specialists.
>
> The greater pluralism of course offerings reflected in 1967-1968, and extending to the present, was accompanied by

> the greater pluralism in staff, both in terms of area of specialization and in terms of religious persuasion. Now present staff of 6 and 1/3 equivalent persons is divided almost equally in three areas: 2 in Biblical Studies, 2 in Asian Religions, and 2 and 1/3 in Western Religious Thought. The proposed change in name reflects the inclusion of Biblical Studies as one-third of the department's curriculum, but no longer the major source of electives or of teaching. The new description of the major reflects the department's present understanding of the purpose of the course offerings, as part of the humanities program in a liberal arts college.[16]

This is an account of the ways in which the impact of "religious studies" upon a traditional "Christian studies" department has expressed itself. The new name of the department is the "Department of Religion," and the description of the major emphasizes religion as an integral part of the humanities and social sciences, as an elemental expression of human life, as collective (eastern and western traditions), and as requiring both a breadth and depth of study.

This case is not one of the fourteen used in this study. However, it suggests two hypotheses which will be tested with reference to the fourteen case studies, namely (1) that, in general, departments which have moved through the progression explained above have not provided for themselves and others a clear and convincing rationale for their identity, methodology, and curricular program, and (2) that, given that failure and the professional evolution of the study of religion, departments and programs such as these may have a significant role to play in that evolution. These two hypotheses constitute a curious paradox, but one that deserves further consideration. It is based on the notion that departments not locked into a rigid self-understanding may retain more potential for development than those committed to a precise image which may become doctrinaire or parochial.

C. The "Pluralism and Church-Related Higher Education" Project

The purposes, methods, and curricula of the study of religion are not the only concerns of this study which have been analyzed in recent literature. The contemporary character of church-related higher education, which provides the institutional context for the study, has also received attention. In 1978, Church-Related Higher Education was published by Judson Press.[17] Edited by Robert Rue Parsonage, Executive for "Education in the Society," a Division of Education and Ministry of the National Council of Churches, this publication is a report on a three-year research project entitled "Pluralism and Church-Related Higher Education" supported by the Ford Foundation, the National Council of Churches, and the Society for Values in Higher Education. The four-stage project was guided by a Study/Action Committee chaired by Harry E. Smith, then Director of the Society and now President of Austin College.[18] The four stages included a review of the historical and theoretical issues in the important literature, the on-campus study of fourteen selected colleges and universities affiliated with thirteen different Christian traditions, a consultation in which the tentative findings of the study were reviewed, and the publication of the revised materials.

The purposes of the project, the latest in a series of important studies on church-related higher education, were (1) to determine the degree of pluralism and diversity in the church-related sector of private higher education, (2) to study the relationship between ecclesiastical polity and college or university purpose and program, (3) to develop criteria for the partnership between church and college, and (4) to identify issues which now require further attention.

The results of the study are important for the continuing discussion about church-related higher education and, as this paper will suggest, for the future of the study of religion. Through the work of Merrimon Cunniggim, author of The Protestant Stake in Higher Education, a new conceptual framework for understanding the church and college relationship is developed.[19] Cunniggim contends that the substantive typologies developed by Pattillo and MacKenzie in Church-Sponsored Higher Education in the United States ("the defender of the faith college," "the non-affirming college," and "the free Christian or Jewish college"), and by Pace in Education and Evangelism: A Profile of Protestant Colleges ("institutions with Protestant roots," "those nominally Protestant," "those that retain a church connection," and "those associated with the evangelical, fundamentalist, and interdenomi-

national churches") are inadequate.[20] They reflect a pejorative normativeness and suggest degrees of ascending worth.

In their place, Cunniggim proposes a continuum of categories and degrees of church relatedness. The "Embodying College" which exemplifies one end of the continuum is that institution which seeks to reflect the beliefs and practices of the sponsoring religious body and which is defined and nurtured by that body. At the opposite end of the continuum is the concept of "Consonant College," one which quietly affirms its church relationship while subtly exposing students to its values as it self-critically determines its own educational agenda. The middle of the continuum Cunniggim calls the area of the "Proclaiming College." It is that institution which takes seriously both its educational and its ecclesiastical character.[21]

On this continuum Cunniggim also charts denominational policy on higher education. The use of the continuum reveals that there are various kinds and degrees of church-relatedness, that colleges/universities and churches have moved on the continuum during their evolution, that institutions affiliated with one denomination are at various points on the continuum, that the policy of some denominations spans a considerable portion of the continuum, and that one important way for measuring church-relatedness is by assessing the institution's own perception of its purpose and program. This conceptual alternative is important because it moves the discussion of church-relatedness beyond adherence to an ideal type, beyond quality of church and college relationship, and beyond traditional educational programmatic proofs of church relationship.

In the conclusion to the study, the contributors suggest that the future of the church and college partnership may need to be shaped as much by the college as by the church. They identify the pluralism and diversity in the church-related private sector as characteristics which convey its significant place in American higher education. They emphasize that experimentation and innovation are evident in various churches and colleges committed to a continuing relationship. They identify the variety of denominational policies on higher education presently in operation, and underline the importance of institutional self-perception as an ingredient in the determination of religious identity.

The primary data upon which this study is based comes from the fourteen institutions analyzed as case studies. Below are the institutions, their sponsoring religious bodies, and their location on the Cunniggim continuum:[22]

Embodying	Proclaiming	Consonant
Concordia Teachers (Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod)	← Morris Brown (African Methodist Episcopal)	Kalamazoo (American Baptist)
Goshen (Mennonite Church)	← West Virginia Wesleyan (United Methodist)	St. Augustine's (Episcopal)
Manchester (Church of the Brethren)	← St. Thomas (Roman Catholic)	
	Austin (Presbyterian Church, United States)	
	Whitworth (United Presbyterian Church, United States of America)	
	Seattle (Jesuit)	
	Furman → (Southern Baptist)	
	Wittenberg → (American Lutheran Church)	
	Drury → (United Church of Christ and Christian Church-Disciples)	

The conceptual continuum, its categories, and the placement of educational institutions on it were developed from the analysis of institutional literature and on-campus visits. Since the continuum is designed to suggest movement, the placement of institutions is an acknowledgement of their present self-conception.

From this data essential characteristics of the partnership of church and college were identified. For a college or university to be related to a religious body, at least it consciously intends to be related, makes available resources for the study and expression of religion, and seeks to articulate and implement its values and those of the sponsoring church. For a church to be college-related, at least it seeks to understand the educational task, expresses its tangible support, and creates means for extending various forms of intangible support. Both the college and the church seek to take the other seriously, and both have a rationale for their participation in the relationship.

Some conclusions of the study relate directly to the study of religion. The study suggests that the serious academic study of religion is one of the important ingredients of college-church relatedness. It also suggests, however, that there is an inverse relationship between the seriousness and sophistication of theological interest in the college/university, on the one hand, and the degree of church-relatedness on the other. The study identifies the tension which often exists between the push for academic excellence and the demand for piety, and suggests that this tension leads toward the diminution of church-relatedness. On the other hand, it also proposes that the revitalization of the future of church-college relationships may need to be initiated by the college, a suggestion which by implication involves those responsible for the study of religion.

D. Fourteen Cases

The "Pluralism and Church-Related Higher Education" project focused on the fourteen colleges or universities representing affiliations with thirteen different Christian traditions mentioned earlier. This study of religion project uses, as case studies, the religion programs at these fourteen institutions. Case studies were also used in the Welch study and in Robert Michaelson's 1965 The Study of Religion in American Universities. The purposes of this study, as mentioned earlier, are three-fold: (1) to analyze the nature of the study of religion at these church-related institutions, (2) to use institutional identity as a means for analyzing and comparing departments of religion, and (3) to consider the strengths and weaknesses of religious studies programs such as these with reference to the role they might play in the continuing evolution of the study of religion. For purposes of comparison, other randomly selected programs in religious studies were reviewed: Calvin, The College of Wooster, Grove City, Montana, Notre Dame, Oberlin, University of California (Santa Barbara), Virginia, Wichita State, and Wellesley. In this report, the conclusions derived from comparisons with these programs will receive less attention than originally expected, given the amount of data on the fourteen institutions.

The analysis of the fourteen departmental programs was based on (1) official institutional and department materials such as catalogues, brochures, and memoranda describing curricular proposals, faculty positions, and academic programs, (2) unofficial letters and notes in response to requests for material, and (3) at least one lengthy conversation with a representative of each

department. The analysis was focused on the department's stated purposes and programs, faculty profiles, curricular offerings, special curricular programs, extra-curricular continuing education programs, and faculty and/or department professional involvements with the sponsoring religious body. In other words, it was focused upon areas wherein the department's self-understanding, its relationship to institutional purpose and program, and its disposition toward the sponsoring denomination were in evidence. The conversations with department representatives were structured around six questions: (1) What are the present distinguishing features, developments, issues, etc., in the relationship of college/university and religious body? (2) What is the purpose, function, and role of the department? (3) What are the major issues before the department now? (4) What are the major issues before the institution now? (5) What assets and/or liabilities accrue to the department by virtue of the institution's identity? (6) What do you foresee as the future professional evolution of the study of religion as it relates to the work of your department?

The general characteristics of these fourteen departments or programs are important. In faculty size, they range from no full-time religion faculty, where two philosophy courses are taught by humanities professors, to 22 theologically trained professors who staff a department at a Roman Catholic diocesan institution. The average department staff size is 3 to 9, with the two predominately black institutions having the smallest departments and those having the largest which are placed in Cunniggim's "embodying" to middle "proclaiming" sections of the church-relatedness continuum. Half of the departments are combined religion-philosophy departments (varying in faculty size from 3 to 38), and more than half of these are found in "embodying-related" institutions. Whether the departments are joint or separate, the philosophy component is usually smaller in terms of faculty, curriculum, and general program. The number of religion courses per department ranges from 7 to 56, with the average in the mid-20s. Generally speaking, the course offerings in the average-sized departments are more numerous than those in other humanities departments, given pre-professional, cross-disciplinary, and specialized courses related to the tradition of the sponsoring religious body.

All of the departments are represented in "core" or "general education" all-college requirements. The range of required courses is between one and seven. Usually there is a choice of courses. The rubric under which required study in religion falls ranges from religion to humanities to exploratory sequence to cultural heritage to biblical studies to aesthetics to theology.

In most cases, religion courses, and not courses about religion taught in other departments, are required. Programs in addition to the standard curricular ones provide an important insight into how these departments understand their purpose and program. In seven of the departments, most of them in institutions at the "embodying" end of the Cunniggim continuum or in Roman Catholic institutions, vocationally oriented programs within the curriculum (Christian education, church music, teaching certification in religion, liturgy, etc.) are found at the undergraduate level, and sometimes at the Masters' degree level. A variation of this special program component is curricular programs which reflect the special religious character of the institution (parochial school religious education, pastoral ministry, peace studies, Anabaptist studies, etc.). The other seven departments, most of which fall at the "consonant" end of the continuum, have no special curricular programs, continuing education programs, or graduate professional programs. The exception to this is an annual workshop for ministers or an endowed lectureship open to the public. Though not identified with the department, institutions at this end of the continuum tend to have a strong chaplaincy program.

Where the department's general orientation falls on a "Christian studies to religious studies" or a "Christian particularity to ecumenical theism to religious pluralism" continuum can be measured by their self-conceptions and staffs.[23] The most frequently mentioned reasons for the study of religion in the departments' literature are these: its nature as a humanistic discipline, its place in western culture, as a means for considering questions of meaning and value or the Judaeo-Christian tradition as a meaningful personal alternative, and as a way of understanding the human response to the ultimate. The least frequently mentioned reasons are these: to study what it means to be religious, to study the methods and problems of the study of religion, to consider eastern and western religious options, and to understand the church. These least frequently mentioned reasons are ones that can be associated, generally, with a phenomenological or history of religions orientation, or with the study of religion as pre-professional Christian studies. This suggests that the majority of these departments see the study of religion primarily in terms of the liberal arts, the western cultural and religious traditions, ethics, and existential questions. In other words, the majority of them have, via the impact of religious studies, moved away from their earlier Christian studies orientation, but in a cautious way.

Another way to measure the general orientation of these departments is by the formal training of those who teach in them.

An overwhelming number of the faculty (+90%) have seminary degrees and, though formal literature does not contain this information, many of these persons are ordained. Seven of the department faculties are staffed by persons who were trained under the auspices of the denomination which supports the institution in which they teach. All of these are found at the "embodying" end of the Cunniggim continuum. In the other seven, the preponderance of faculty members has seminary degrees, and doctorates at institutions where a Protestant seminary is located. Only one institution--a "consonant" one--has a faculty whose collective formal training is not preponderantly that of a seminary. In a few instances, the most recent faculty addition to the departments represents a non-seminary religious studies orientation.

To department purpose and faculty profile can be added curricular character as a general consideration of the orientation of the department. Courses listed range from vocational or pre-professional (The Helping Ministries, and Parish Visitation and Evangelism) to seminary (Christian Doctrine and Theological Studies) to courses reflecting religion as a liberal arts or humanistic discipline (Religious Perspectives on Ethical Issues and Great Living Religions) to courses with a phenomenological orientation (Religious Myth and Symbol, and Religions of Archaic Man). There are also specialized courses which reflect the religious affiliation of the institution, such as Brethren Life and Thought and Roman Catholic Social Teaching. In general, the religion departments in what Cunniggim labels "embodying" institutions have curricula which fall on the "Christian studies" end of the "Christian studies to religious studies" continuum. Those in the "consonant" category have curricula that fall between Christian studies and religious studies and probably close to what might be called "ecumenical theism." Those institutions at the middle or the embodying end of the proclaiming category tend to be Christian studies in orientation, whereas those on the consonant end of the proclaiming category or in the consonant category tend to be in the middle, between Christian studies and religious studies. Among these fourteen institutions there are no examples of religious studies curricula as found in some of the randomly selected departments, and more than half are on the Christian studies end of the curricular continuum.

The interview responses to the six questions provide additional information. Asked whether they were familiar with the "Pluralism and Church-Related Higher Education" project in which their institution participated, the majority said "no" and the remainder indicated a vague sense of its existence but no

direct participation in the on-campus study. Regarding the present partnership of church and college, one embodying college response indicated that "it is more alive than ever." A majority of the others identified either a new turn toward interest in the denomination or a stable relationship. Regarding the purpose of the departments, information mentioned earlier in this section was confirmed, but in addition, the need to distinguish between the study of religion for the general student and for the major and pre-professional was emphasized consistently. That is the result of participation in general education curricular offerings and in light of a small number of majors in most of the departments (0 to 20), though one department has 75 to 100 majors. Among the most pressing issues before the departments, those consistently mentioned were (1) distinguishing between religious studies as humanistic and as vocational, (2) the problem of identifying the essential and the non-essential courses when choices must be made, (3) upper-level enrollments, and (4) the problems of department methodologies and identity, given changing student interests. Those issues presently before the institutions, other than finances and enrollments, were the shrinking of the humanities, the viability of present institutional identity in the future, and how the institution can be an educational asset for the sponsoring denomination. The majority of those interviewed believe that the department is affected by its presence in an institution with religious sponsorship. Most suggested that the department either profits from this situation or that greater demands and expectations are placed upon it. Most agreed that it received special attention of one kind or another from the administration. Regarding the evolution of religious studies, most felt that the further clarification of the identity of religious studies was necessary and that departments such as these had something to contribute, but few had given it any considerable thought or knew what forms those contributions might take.

E. Toward an Interpretation

The data compiled on these fourteen departments provides a profile of the study of religion in one sector of private higher education. It also lends itself to interpretations which expose problems and possibilities for the future of the study of religion. The following observations focus on the major trends, some of which relate to both institutional and departmental realities.

(1) Among the trends which the data reveals, the following are worth mentioning: increased emphasis on the importance of first and second level all-college religion courses for the

student with general interest; increased concern about the decreasing number of majors and its implications for upper-level course offerings and enrollments; increased reliance upon social scientific models, methods, and data; decreased student interest in non-western studies and eastern spirituality and increased interest in western traditions and studies; increased interest in the department of religion's role in general education or core studies; increased conflict between the needs and interests of students and those of the faculty; increased curricular attention to required areas of study (language, international studies, and the humanities) which could affect positively the study of religion; and increased external trends and pressures which could affect adversely the staff, status, and curriculum of departments of religion.

(2) Departments with the most clarity about their purpose and program are those who understand their work with reference to the identity of the institution and the sponsoring religious body, who take those relationships seriously, and whose context, religiously speaking, is distinctive ("embodying" and Roman Catholic institutions). Conversely, those departments which exhibit the least clarity about their purpose and program are those whose institutions are in the "proclaiming" category, whose departmental orientation falls somewhere between Christian studies and religious studies, and whose institution and sponsoring religious body are unclear about their own role in higher education.

(3) Those departments most influenced by a religious studies orientation are now in the middle of the Christian studies-religious studies continuum. The impact of religious studies has been a partial one, and the result is that the study of religion is articulated in terms of liberal arts or humanistic studies, though what that means is not always clear.

(4) The image, success, integrity, and popularity of any particular department are linked rather closely to the particularities of the institutional context in which it exists. Success is also linked to how well the department has come to terms with its context. The sponsoring religious body and the institutional ethos have at least an indirect impact upon the nature of the department. That is, accountability is a complicated and diverse matter with accountability going beyond disciplinary identity and the professional community.

(5) In more cases than not, departments of religion receive special attention within their respective institutions. Some are "privileged" (staff size, budget, influence, etc.), others are

expected to out-perform other departments, and still others are "valued for the wrong reasons" by administrators. This results in unusual assets and liabilities. Theoretically, it suggests that the departments may play a special role in the direction of institutional life. In practice, it is unclear how much of this influence is exerted, how it is received, and what impact it has.

(6) Some departments in "proclaiming" institutions which traditionally have been Christian studies departments have over-reacted to the impact of religious studies. The impact is primarily apparent in the curriculum. But they have not distinguished themselves as a religious studies department, and they have not communicated to their faculty colleagues outside the department what they understand the study of religion to be. Another consequence is that they have not taken their specific setting seriously. If anything, it is perceived as a liability for the study of religion, and the department has not been involved in special curricular or continuing education programs designed for a wider audience.

(7) Consensus on department identity, purpose, and program is essential for the on-going creative work of a department, even if that consensus is around a pluralistic set of approaches. The consensus must be articulated clearly and effectively. This provides a direction for the internal work of the department and for those affected by it. It is important for students, in terms of their academic expectations, their reasons for choosing courses or a major, their vocational direction, and the group sense achieved through identifying with a department. Many of the departments studied seem not to have achieved this. Rather, a vague sense of purpose and program has evolved as a result of many ad hoc decisions.

(8) There are only a few examples of departments which have considered sufficiently their history, their context, new developments in the study of religion, student needs, and their understanding of the study of religion so as to shape these varied forces into a program that has integrity, consistency, and clarity, at least as evidenced in the published literature.

(9) Departments of religion are pulled in many different directions on accountability: to the professional community, the sponsoring religious body, the institution, the students, and faculty colleagues outside the department. This is particularly true in situations where they are believed or perceived to have a special status. This combination of directions is more complex in church-related higher education than that experienced in other departments. The issue of accountability, therefore, is one that

deserves considerable attention. If it is not clarified and resolved, it can play havoc with the on-going work of the department.

(10) It is clear that departments have not devoted sufficient time to questions related to internal self-conception such as these: How is the study of religion to be done? What is the department's role in the institution? How is the department to be accountable to student needs, faculty interests, etc.? What are the new developments in the study of religion elsewhere and what do they mean for us?

These ten interpretive statements provide a partial profile of the study of religion in the fourteen departments examined in this study. Many pertain to both the institutional setting and to the department. They underline the important practical realities with which departments contend: enrollment, courses, staff, external expectations, etc. The statements point also to another level of reality: that of rationale, conceptual models, and methodology. This collective picture is unique. It would be different were one to analyze public university cases, private independent cases, or cases not as representative of the broad spectrum of church-related higher education as these. That uniqueness suggests that departments of religion such as these may have a contribution to make in the future of the study of religion. It is a modest proposal regarding that contribution with which this report concludes.

F. A Modest Proposal

Converging trends suggest that the times are auspicious for considering the future of the study of religion. There is new attention to the issue of disciplinary identity within the profession. The Commission on the Humanities recently recommended a decade of emphasis on the humanities in American education. The pluralism and future of church-related higher education have become matters of interest, as has the impact of life-long learning and the "shadow educational system" of the corporate world upon public education. The Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education recently predicted an educational future which will include a downward drift in quality, balance, integrity, dynamism, diversity, private initiative, and research capability.[24]

This is the context in which the findings of this analysis of the study of religion in church-related higher education are set. Among those findings are these: that there is a consider-

able diversity characterizing the study of religion in private church-related higher education; that department of religion purpose and program are related to institutional purpose and program, and vice versa; that in some cases, the character and tenets of the sponsoring religious body have a considerable impact upon the study of religion; that there is a clarity of purpose and program in those departments in institutions that also have a similar clarity, and conversely, that the lack of clarity cuts across both institution and department; that the impact of religious studies in the public sector has had an effect upon those traditional departments where Christian studies was once the norm; and that in those departments whose orientation falls between Christian studies and religious studies, there is a need for conceptual clarity, methodological alternatives, and an understanding of the practical purposes and programs of the study of religion.

In "Search for a Paradigm: Outline of a Theory of Religion," Paul Wiebe's effort to formulate a comprehensive theory and paradigm for the study of religion mentioned earlier, he describes the evolution of the study of religion from traditional systematic theology to the history of religions to the emergence of new theology to religious studies. Claiming that religious studies is the result of an alliance between history of religions and new theology, he says:

> The duality in the roots of its being produced an uneasy strain in the enterprise, a strain that expresses itself in the fact that it has no common tongue. Two clear clues to this chaotic situation are the constant appeal by the members of the profession to its interdisciplinary credentials and their call for a pluralism of methods, both showing that it is still possible to make a virtue of a necessity.
>
> Today the study of religion is six characters in search of an author, many enterprises in quest of a coherent principle, an institution in need of a paradigm (perhaps even a set of alternative paradigms).[25]

Wiebe describes strains within religious studies which have their equivalents in the departmental purposes and programs described in this study, irrespective of their orientation. There are compelling professional and pragmatic reasons which underline the urgency which Wiebe conveys, though at present, the

"quest" seems more essential than the establishing of one coherent theory, principle, or paradigm. This study is part of that quest. The quest might also include a comprehensive assessment of the study of religion in the church-related sector similar to that done a decade ago by Welch, a series of conferences focused on issues like those identified in this report, and commissioned study papers on more theoretical problems. The purpose of all of these developments would be to analyze the distinctiveness and to avoid assigning to it a new normativeness, in light of a decade of developments and educational predictions for the 1980s and beyond.

There are a variety of factors which suggest that before any coherent theory, principle, or paradigm is enthroned as a new orthodoxy wherein the study of religion is grounded, a comprehensive description of what, in fact, is presently done under the aegis of "the study of religion" in the private and public sector needs to be established again. One of these factors is the results of this study itself. Another is the absence of any recent collective profile. A third is the value derived from analyzing and comparing departments of religion, a value which goes considerably beyond the collection of information because it raises all of the more theoretical and conceptual questions. Until this comprehensive description is established, the real nature of the "chaotic situation" will remain a mystery. So will the pluralism within it and the actual theories and paradigms whereby the study of religion is presently done.

The way to establish a coherent principle and paradigm is not to determine the professional consensus and to declare the majority principles and paradigms of that consensus the new theory. But there is an equal danger in establishing a new conceptual framework in a theoretical and abstract way. That can lead to the same forms of parochialism from which the study of religion presently suffers. Hence, one important step toward ordering the chaos is to probe that chaos itself for the distinctiveness, richness, breadth, and depth which characterize the study of religion. Within this diversity, clues may be found concerning the marvelous ways for learning to talk about religion in Taiwan, to quote from the letter of a student, and to quote from a professor, clues on why the study of religion needs an "author," a "principle," and a "paradigm," and what forms they should take.

The collective picture described in this report provides a point of departure and comparison for other departments and professors considering the future in a present context and with reference to the past. The picture also indicates that some

issues in the study of religion recur, and do so in many different contexts. Included among them are the need to identify what is common in a plurality of methodologies, to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a confessional approach to the study of religion, to shape the evolution from Christian studies toward a more pluralistic model, to integrate history of religions, phenomenological, and other approaches into a more traditional department, to articulate the study of religion as a humanistic or liberal arts venture, and to determine the distinctiveness of the study of religion in church-related higher education. These are issues which must be intentionally addressed by religionists within the private church-related sector because the qualitative future of these departments, and perhaps the institutions themselves, is linked to them. These issues also constitute specific areas in which those teaching in this sector can make contributions to the at-large professional discussion about the future of the study of religion.

Footnotes

1. Ms. Cynthia Weiler, a letter of August 26, 1980, from Manila, Republic of the Philippines.

2. Carol Jin Evans, "I Tell Them I'm a Liberal Arts Major," The Chronicle of Higher Education, Vol. XX, No. 15 (June 9, 1980), p. 48.

3. Jacob Neusner, "Stranger at Home: The Task of Religious Studies," the inaugural lecture of the Department of Religious Studies, Arizona State University, October 25, 1979 (unpublished), p. 9.

4. See Fred E. Crossland, "Learning to Cope with a Downward Slope," and Carol Frances, "Apocalyptic vs. Strategic Planning," in Change, Vol. XII, No. 5 (July-August, 1980), pp. 18ff and 19ff.

5. Claude Welch, Religion in the Undergraduate Curriculum: An Analysis and Interpretation (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges, 1972), p. 123. See also Robert Michaelson, The Study of Religion in American Universities (New Haven: The Society for Religion in Higher Education, 1965).

6. See Neusner, "Stranger at Home . . . ."

7. David C. Smith, "Religious Studies: After the Creation," in The Forum for Liberal Education, Vol. II, No. 8 (June, 1980), pp. 1-3.

8. Richard Wentz, "Call Me Ishmael," The Christian Century, Vol. XCVII, No. 32 (October 15, 1980), pp. 966-69. See also Robert N. Bellah, "The New Religious Consciousness and the Secular University," in Daedalus, Vol. CIII, No. 4 (February, 1974), pp. 110-15.

9. Paul Wiebe, "Search for a Paradigm: Outline of a Theory of Religion," an unpublished essay, pp. 1-3.

10. Lonnie D. Kliever, "The Integrity of Undergraduate Programs," in The Council on the Study of Religion Bulletin, Vol. XI, No. 4 (October, 1980), pp. 1-2.

11. Claude Welch, Graduate Education in Religion (Missoula: University of Montana Press, 1971), p. 13. Quoted in Wiebe, "Search for a Paradigm . . .," p. 18.

12. Van A. Harvey, "Reflections on the Study of Religion," Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 1 (1970), pp. 17-29.

13. Paul Ramsey and John F. Wilson, Editors, The Study of Religion in Colleges and Universities (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 3-21.

14. In this paper, "religious studies" is sometimes used as a specific label for a particular approach to the study of religion, and it is sometimes used as a synonym for the study of religion in general. The context in which it is used is designed to indicate which usage is intended.

15. Lonnie Kliever (see "The Integrity of . . .") has proposed this progression. The response is that of Paul Wiebe in a letter dated June 11, 1980.

16. A letter from Prof. Roger A. Johnson, Chair, Department of Religion, Wellseley College, to Ms. Carol Buckman, Association of American Colleges, April 11, 1980.

17. Robert Rue Parsonage, Editor, Church-Related Higher Education (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1978).

18. Harry E. Smith first suggested that the specific design of this departmental study be built upon the research and conclusions in Church-Related Higher Education. The author is indebted to him for the suggestion.

19. Merrimon Cunniggim, The Protestant Stake in Higher Education (Washington, D.C.: Council of Protestant Colleges and Universities, 1961).

20. Manning M. Pattillo, Jr., and Donald M. MacKenzie, Church-Sponsored Higher Education in the United States (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1966), and C. Robert Pace, Education and Evangelism: A Profile of Protestant Colleges (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972).

21. See Parsonage, Church-Related . . ., pp. 32-37, and also Appendix A of this paper.

22. See Parsonage, Church-Related . . ., p. 38, and also Appendix B of this paper.

23. See Kliever, "The Integrity of . . . ."

24. See The Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, Three Thousand Futures (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1980).

25. See Wiebe, "Search for a Paradigm . . .," p. 12a.

26. See Parsonage, Church-Related . . ., pp. 32-37.

27. See Parsonage, Church-Related . . ., p. 38.

28. See Parsonage, Church-Related . . ., p. 41.

APPENDIX A

Categories of Church-Relatedness[26]

A. The Consonant College:

It is an ally of the church with a quiet style of affirming its relationship to the church. It is likely to be self-confident, self-critical, and mature. The influence of the church is present in subtle ways. A small percentage of the student body may actually be affiliated with the denomination, but a large percentage leave the college with the values of the church.

B. The Proclaiming College:

It is a witness for the church and a credible witness to its being an academic partner of its proud denominational parent. The college knows itself first as a college, not as a religious institution. But it is proud to announce its affiliation with its sponsoring denomination. It takes seriously both its intellectual and its ecclesiastical character. Most Catholic and mainstream Protestant colleges fall into this group.

C. The Embodying College:

It is a reflection of the church. Its allegiance is to the tenets of its church, with educational overtones. It is the mirror, almost the embodiment, of the denomination to which it belongs. Here the church will be more likely to set the pace and define the practice of the college, so the colleges of one particular church will probably be very much alike. Most such colleges are the organs of churches that adhere to a sharply defined orthodoxy differing in some special regard from the general run of religious thought.

APPENDIX B

Categories and Degress of Church-Relatedness: The Colleges • 27

(False claim)				(No claim)
Concordia Teachers (Nebr.) *Goshen* *Manchester* David Lipscomb Andrews	*Morris Brown* *West Virginia Wesleyan* *St. Thomas* St. Olaf St. Andrews	*Austin* *Whitworth* *Seattle* Notre Dame Southern Methodist	*Furman* *Wittenberg* *Drury* Dickinson Wake Forest	*Kalamazoo* *St. Augustine's* Haverford Salem (N.C.) Carleton
Embodying College Reflection of the Church	Proclaiming College Witness for the Church			Consonant College Ally of the Church

• COLLEGES VISITED ARE ITALICIZED.

APPENDIX C

Categories and Degrees of Church Relatedness: The Denominations [28]